

LETTER FROM THE STATE HEALTH DIRECTOR

I want to congratulate the North Carolina Division of Public Health's Injury and Violence Prevention Branch and its multiple stakeholders on the completion of this pioneer document. Never before has the state designed and published a comprehensive injury and violence prevention strategic plan, let alone one with such broad collaboration by so many. Strong collaboration has come from state agencies, universities, private organizations, and advocacy groups that share a dedication and commitment to reducing the burden of injury on the people of North Carolina. These recommendations will be further complimented by parallel recommendations coming forth from both the N.C. Institute of Medicine's Adolescent Task Force and its Prevention Task Force.

Injuries exact a heavy toll on North Carolinians and remain the leading cause of death for people ages 1 to 48. An average of 6,300 state residents of all ages die from their injuries each year, while even greater numbers are hospitalized (approximately 154,000) and treated in emergency departments (approximately 812,000). A statewide effort to combat these numbers is a necessity and will require innovative ideas, additional resources, continuous surveillance and strong evaluation of programs to make sure we remain on track to achieve the plan's six goals. In addition, while we continue to work to prevent all injuries, we must focus on those that exact the heaviest toll. These include motor vehicle crashes, poisonings, falls among older adults, homicides/assaults and suicides.

Success in reducing these numbers will demand increased attention to everyday behavior and to our culture, which often views injuries as "accidents." Most of these "accidents" are preventable, but prevention will require organized efforts including the implementation of evidenced-based prevention programs as well as environmental and policy changes.


Finally, it is important to realize that this five-year plan is not intended to replace the individual plans and goals of the many partners. Rather, it is to reflect these and provide a roadmap for further collaboration to build a stronger state infrastructure for injury and violence prevention efforts. No single agency, in and of itself, can effectively reduce the rate of injuries to the degree proposed in this plan – 15 percent in the next five years. The broad array of partners mentioned above will continue to be essential. The Injury and Violence Prevention State Advisory Council will assist in the plan's implementation and monitoring.

It is my sincere hope you will examine the plan and identify ways in which you can play a role in decreasing our injury and violence rates. If you are not directly engaged with any of the organizations that contributed to the plan, please consider participation with one or, alternatively, work in other state, regional or local level efforts.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey P. Engel, M.D.
State Health Director



If a disease were killing our children at the rate unintentional injuries are, the public would be outraged and demand that this killer be stopped.

C. Everett Koop, M.D., Sc.D., former Surgeon General of the United States and former Chairman of National Safe Kids Campaign, Safe Kids Voice, Winter 2003, p. 11.

With injury being the most costly disease in the United States, it is imperative that a collective organized effort be constructed and implemented to reduce health care costs. The State Strategic Plan for Injury and Violence Prevention is a beginning and will fit nicely into the North Carolina State Trauma System strategic plan as we evolve this very vital area of health care in our state.

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